4: Marcoy T-5 (ca. 1865) 1875 SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

canoe grazed the topmost branches, we passed suddenly from the white waters of the Amazon to the black waters of the Atacoari. Having reached the place where this river bifurcates, we took the left branch, and landed in a little creek, where a few houses were visible. Brazilian soldiers, of the kind who poniard their chiefs under pretext of tyranny, had taken refuge in this spot, and lived conjugally with Ticuna women who had escaped from some mission. These runaway warriors, who may be frequently met with on the canals and igarapés of the Amazon, where the sentence of a court-martial cannot reach them, have sometimes received us in a most hospitable manner, and caused us to wonder at the peaceful tableau presented by their home life. All cultivate a few yucca-roots and bananas, hunt and fish to supply their table, traffic with the river traders in sarsaparilla and chocolate, which they collect in the woods, and from this trifling commerce draw a little money with which to purchase cotton goods wherewith to clothe themselves, and ornaments to bedeck their wives. Exempt from all troubles and anxiety, without ambition or unsatisfied dreams of any kind, these philosophical deserters, under the ban of society, but received with open arms by nature, pass their days happily with the companions of their choice and the little, brown, and hairy marmots which Heaven has been pleased to send them.

The business which brought my young Portuguese to the dwelling of these planters was connected with an order for a load of sarsaparilla which he had received from the Barra do Rio Negro, and which the Atacoari merchant had promised to deliver at the end of the month. The transaction being concluded to the satisfaction of the two parties, and sealed with a dram of rum taken from a common glass, we supped and slept beneath the roof of the Brazilian soldier. The next morning, instead of descending the Amazon, we continued to ascend the course of the Atacoari.

To the square houses of the soldiers soon succeeded the round huts of the Ticunas. These natives, who, as I was informed, inhabited only the banks of the principal river, dwell also, in point of fact, on the banks of the Yacanga and Yanayaquina, two tributaries of the right and left banks respectively.

The first Ticunas we came across made a very bad impression on me. We had just started on our way. It was seven o'clock, and the sun was rising: the more elevated parts of the landscape were already brilliantly illuminated; below all was enveloped in a soft fog; the birds chattered whilst preening their wet feathers; the flowers, vivified by the freshness of the morning, commenced to exhale their various perfumes; drops of dew trickled slowly from the leaves and fell one by one into the river. Leaning against the side of the canoe, I was idly dreaming, hearing without understanding and gazing without seeing, when, from behind some brushwood which hid from us a bend in the river, issued, or rather shot out, a little canoe manned by two Ticunas, a man and a woman: the man rowed, the woman steered with the paddle; in the centre of their vessel, a mere nut-shell, there was visible a bunch of bananas and edible roots, half-covered with some large cane-leaves. The brilliant green of the fresh leaves, still glistening with dew, contrasted with the blue and vermilion of a tame ara squatting on them. As they were rowing towards us we were able to examine them at our leisure.